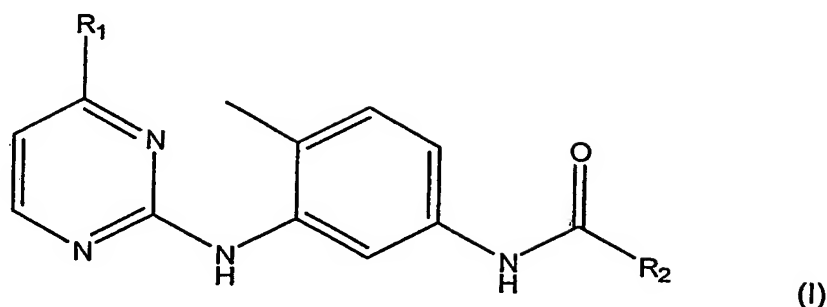


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We claim:

1. A compound of the formula (I)



wherein

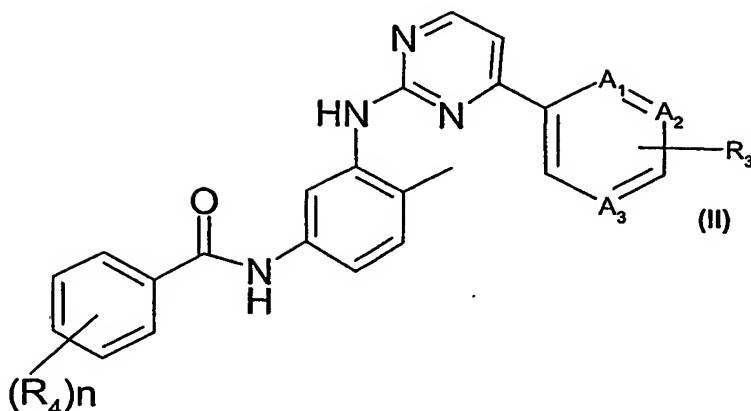
R_1 is a phenyl radical or a heteroaryl radical; and

R_2 is a phenyl radical;

or an N-oxide or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

2. A compound of formula I wherein R_1 is selected from a phenyl radical, a thiazolyl radical, a pyrazinyl radical, a pyrimidinyl radical or a pyridyl radical.
3. A compound of claim 2 wherein R_2 is phenyl that is substituted in at least the 3-position by halogen, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino; lower alkyl; halo-lower alkyl; lower alkoxy; halo-lower alkoxy; lower alkylthio; or halo-lower alkylthio.
4. A compound of claim 3 wherein R_2 is phenyl that is substituted in at least the 3-position by fluorine, halo-lower alkyl, halo-lower alkoxy, or halo-lower alkylthio.
5. A compound of claim 1 wherein R_1 is a phenyl, 2-thiazolyl, 2-pyrazinyl, 5-pyrimidinyl or 3-pyridyl radical.
6. A compound of claim 5 wherein R_2 is phenyl that is substituted in at least the 3-position by fluorine, halo-lower alkyl, halo-lower alkoxy, or halo-lower alkylthio.
7. A compound of claim 1 of formula II

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wherein

n is 0, 1 or 2;

A_1 , A_2 and A_3 are C, or A_1 and A_2 are C and A_3 is N, or A_1 and A_3 are N and A_2 is C, or A_1 is C and A_2 and A_3 are N;

R_3 is $-NR_5R_6$, halogen, $-O-R_8$, $-S-R_8$, or lower alkyl which is unsubstituted or substituted by halogen, hydroxy, lower alkoxy, $-NR_7R_8$, or a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon;

R_4 is amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino, wherein the alkyl groups are unsubstituted or substituted by halogen or lower alkoxy; halogen, lower alkyl, halo-lower alkyl, lower alkoxy, halo-lower alkoxy, hydroxy, lower alkanoyl, carbamoyl, N-mono- or N,N-di-substituted carbamoyl, mercapto, lower alkylthio or halo-lower alkylthio;

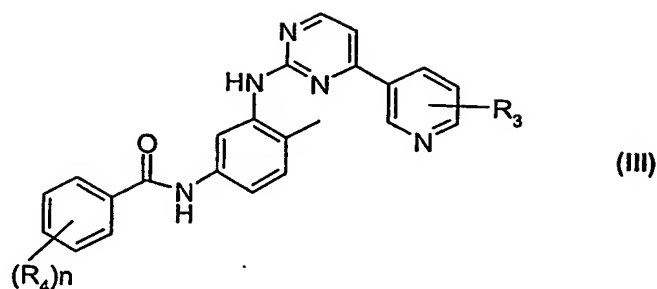
R_5 , R_6 , R_7 and R_8 are independently hydrogen, a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon, lower alkyl, C_3 - C_8 cycloalkyl, C_3 - C_8 cycloalkyl-lower alkylene, lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy, a heteroaryl radical, a heterocyclic radical, amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl amino or R_5 and R_6 or R_7 and R_8 together with the nitrogen form a heteroaromatic or heterocyclic radical;

R_8 is a heterocyclic radical, a heteroaromatic radical, heteroaryl-lower-alkylene, heterocyclic-lower-alkylene, lower alkyl or lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy or $-NR_7R_8$;

or an N-oxide or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

8. A compound of claim 7 wherein R_2 is phenyl that is substituted in at least the 3-position by halogen, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino; lower alkyl; halo-lower alkyl; lower alkoxy; halo-lower alkoxy; lower alkylthio; or halo-lower alkylthio.

9. A compound of claim 1 of formula (III)



wherein

n is 0, 1 or 2;

R₃ is -NR₅R₆, halogen, -O-R₈, -S-R₈, or lower alkyl which is unsubstituted or substituted by halogen, hydroxy, lower alkoxy, -NR₇R₈, or a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon;

R₄ is amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino, wherein the alkyl groups are unsubstituted or substituted by halogen or lower alkoxy; halogen, lower alkyl, halo-lower alkyl, lower alkoxy, halo-lower alkoxy, hydroxy, lower alkanoyl, carbamoyl, N-mono- or N,N-di-substituted carbamoyl, mercapto, lower alkylthio or halo-lower alkylthio;

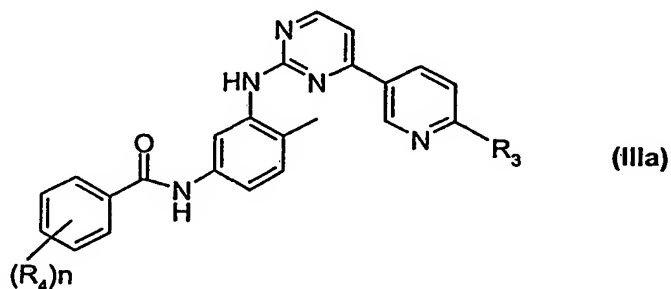
R₅, R₆, R₇ and R₈ are independently hydrogen, a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon, lower alkyl, C₃-C₈cycloalkyl, C₃-C₈cycloalkyl-lower alkylene, lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy, a heteroaryl radical, a heterocyclic radical, amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl amino or R₅ and R₆ or R₇ and R₈ together with the nitrogen form a heteroaromatic or heterocyclic radical;

R₈ is a heterocyclic radical, a heteroaromatic radical, heteroaryl-lower-alkylene, heterocyclic-lower-alkylene, lower alkyl or lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy or -NR₇R₈;

or an N-oxide or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

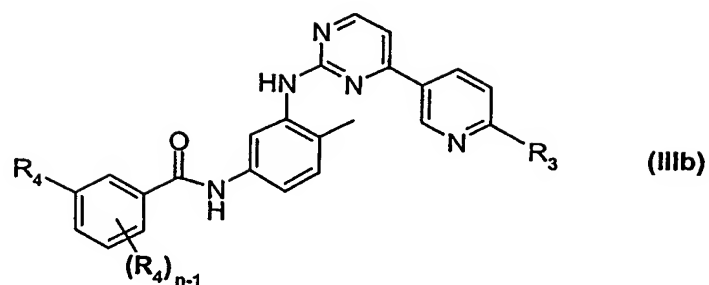
10. A compound of claim 9 wherein R₄ is halogen, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino; lower alkyl; halo-lower alkyl; lower alkoxy; halo-lower alkoxy; lower alkylthio; or halo-lower alkylthio.

11. A compound of claim 10 wherein R_4 is phenyl halo-lower alkyl, halo-lower alkoxy or halo-lower alkylthio.
12. A compound of claim 9 wherein R_4 is trifluoromethyl.
13. A compound of claim 9 wherein R_3 is $-NR_5R_6$ and one of R_5 and R_6 is lower alkyl substituted by $-NR_7R_8$ and R_7 and R_8 together with the nitrogen form a heteroaromatic or heterocyclic radical.
14. A compound of claim 13 wherein the heteroaromatic or heterocyclic radical is selected from morphilino, thiomorphilino, piperaziny, piperidiny, and pyridyl.
15. A compound of claim wherein $-NR_5R_6$ is a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical.
16. A compound of claim 15 wherein $-NR_5R_6$ is a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical selected from piperaziny, 4-methylpiperaziny, piperidiny, 4-hydroxypiperidiny, morphilino and thiomorphilino.
17. A compound of claim 9 wherein R_8 is lower alkyl, lower alkyl substituted by hydroxy or lower alkoxy, or a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical.
18. A compound of claim 9 of formula (IIIa)

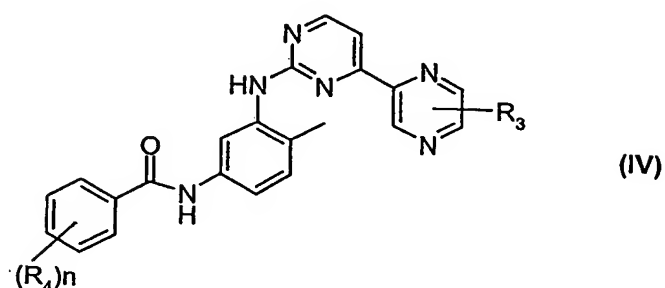


19. A compound of claim 9 of formula IIIb

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20. A compound of claim 7 of formula IV



wherein

n is 0, 1 or 2;

R₃ is hydrogen, -NR₅R₆, halogen, -O-R₈, -S-R₈, or lower alkyl which is unsubstituted or substituted by halogen, hydroxy, lower alkoxy, -NR₇R₈, or a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon;

R₄ is amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino, wherein the alkyl groups are unsubstituted or substituted by halogen or lower alkoxy; halogen, lower alkyl, halo-lower alkyl, lower alkoxy, halo-lower alkoxy, hydroxy, lower alkanoyl, carbamoyl, N-mono- or N,N-di-substituted carbamoyl, mercapto, lower alkylthio or halo-lower alkylthio;

R₅, R₆, R₇ and R₈ are independently hydrogen, a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon, lower alkyl, C₃-C₈cycloalkyl, C₃-C₈cycloalkyl-lower alkylene, lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy, a heteroaryl radical, a heterocyclic radical, amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl amino or R₅ and R₆ or R₇ and R₈ together with the nitrogen form a heteroaromatic or heterocyclic radical;

R₈ is a heterocyclic radical, a heteroaromatic radical, heteroaryl-lower-alkylene, heterocyclic-lower-alkylene, lower alkyl or lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy or -NR₇R₈;

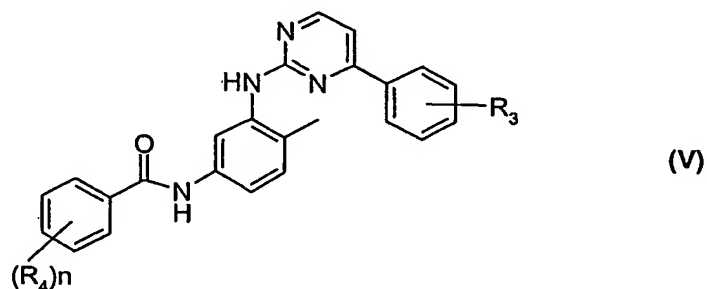
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or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

21. A compound of claim 20 wherein R_4 is halogen, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino; lower alkyl; halo-lower alkyl; lower alkoxy; halo-lower alkoxy; lower alkylthio; or halo-lower alkylthio.

22. A compound of claim 21 wherein at least one R_4 substituent is in the meta position relative to the carbonyl.

23. A compound of claim 7 of the formula (V)



wherein

n is 0, 1 or 2;

R_3 is $-NR_5R_6$, halogen, $-OR_8$, $-SR_8$, or lower alkyl which is unsubstituted or substituted by halogen, hydroxy, lower alkoxy, $-NR_7R_8$, or a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon;

R_4 is amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino, wherein the alkyl groups are unsubstituted or substituted by halogen or lower alkoxy; halogen, lower alkyl, halo-lower alkyl, lower alkoxy, halo-lower alkoxy, hydroxy, lower alkanoyl, carbamoyl, N-mono- or N,N-di-substituted carbamoyl, mercapto, lower alkylthio or halo-lower alkylthio;

R_5 , R_6 , R_7 and R_8 are independently hydrogen, a heteroaryl or heterocyclic radical attached at a ring carbon, lower alkyl, C_3 - C_8 cycloalkyl, C_3 - C_8 cycloalkyl-lower alkylene, lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy, a heteroaryl radical, a heterocyclic radical, amino, mono- or di-lower alkyl amino or R_5 and R_6 or R_7 and R_8 together with the nitrogen form a heteroaromatic or heterocyclic radical;

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R₈ is a heterocyclic radical, a heteroaromatic radical, heteroaryl-lower-alkylene, heterocyclic-lower-alkylene, lower alkyl or lower alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, lower alkoxy or -NR₇R₈;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

24. A compound of claim 23 wherein R₄ is halogen, mono- or di-lower alkyl-substituted amino; lower alkyl; halo-lower alkyl; lower alkoxy; halo-lower alkoxy; lower alkylthio; or halo-lower alkylthio.

25. A compound of claim 24 wherein at least one R₄ substituent is in the meta position relative to the carbonyl.

26. A method of treating a patient having a disease characterized by excessive signaling through the MAP kinase signaling pathway, which comprises administering to the patient an effective RAF kinase inhibiting amount of a compound of formula (I) according to claim 1.

27. A method of treating a patient having a disease characterized by excessive signaling through the MAP kinase signaling pathway, which comprises administering to the patient an effective RAF kinase inhibiting amount of a compound of formula (II) according to claim 7.

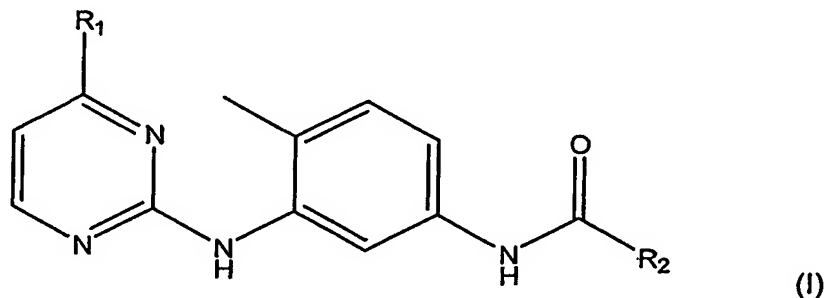
28. A method of treating a patient having a disease characterized by excessive signaling through the MAP kinase signaling pathway, which comprises administering to the patient an effective RAF kinase inhibiting amount of a compound of formula (III) according to claim 9.

28. A method of treating a patient having a disease characterized by excessive signaling through the MAP kinase signaling pathway, which comprises administering to the patient an effective RAF kinase inhibiting amount of a compound of formula (IIIb) according to claim 19.

29. A method of treating a patient having a disease characterized by excessive signaling through the MAP kinase signaling pathway, which comprises administering to the patient an effective RAF kinase inhibiting amount of a compound of formula (IV) according to claim 20.

30. A method of treating a patient having a disease characterized by excessive signaling through the MAP kinase signaling pathway, which comprises administering to the patient an effective RAF kinase inhibiting amount of a compound of formula (V) according to claim 23.

31. A process for the preparation of a compound of the formula (I),



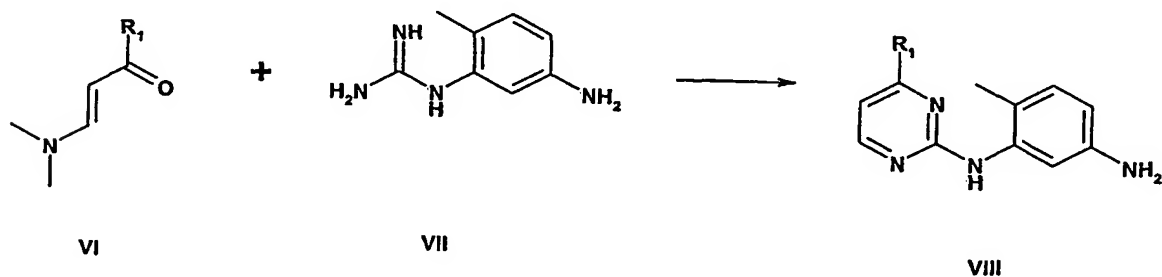
wherein

R_1 is a phenyl radical or a heteroaryl radical; and

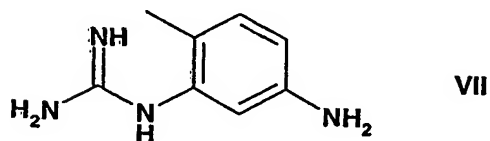
R_2 is a phenyl radical;

or an N-oxide or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof;

which process comprises preparing a compound of formula VIII by reacting a compound of formula VI with a compound of formula VII according to the following scheme

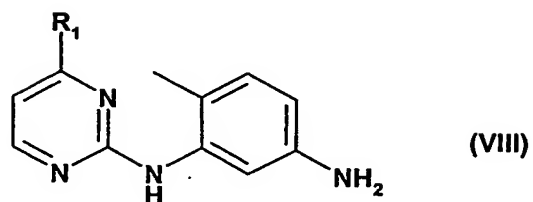


32. A compound of formula VII



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33. A compound of formula VIII



wherein R₁ is a phenyl radical or a heteroaryl radical.

34. A compound of the formula

